



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Nameless

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Being worldly means losing your name and having the eyes of your soul “darkened”, anaesthetized, until you no longer see the people around you. This is the sin that Francis spoke about on Thursday during Mass at Santa Marta.

“Today’s Lenten Liturgy offers us two stories, two judgements and three names”, Francis began. The two stories are those of the parable, narrated by Luke (16:19-31), of the rich man and of the poor man named Lazarus. In particular, the Pope stated, the first story is “that of the rich man, who was clothed in purple and the finest linen”, who “took good care of himself”, and “feasted sumptuously every day”. The text, Francis indicated, “doesn’t say he was bad”, but rather that he had “a comfortable life, he gave himself a good life”. In fact, “the Gospel doesn’t say that he overindulged”; instead his was “a quiet life, with friends”. Who knows, perhaps “if he had parents, he surely sent them things so they would have the necessities of life”. And maybe “he was a religious man, in his way. Perhaps he recited a few prayers; and surely two or three times a year he went to the temple to make sacrifices and gave large offerings to the priests”. And “they, with their clerical cowardliness, thanked him and made him sit in the place of honour”. This was the social lifestyle of the rich man presented by Luke.

Then there is “the second story, that of Lazarus”, the poor mendicant who lay at the rich man’s gate. How is it possible that this man didn’t realize that Lazarus was there, below his house, poor and starving? The wounds that the Gospel speaks of, the Pope said, are “a symbol of the many needs he had”. However, “when the rich man left the house, perhaps the car he left in had darkly tinted windows so he couldn’t see out”. But “surely his soul, the eyes of his soul were tinted dark so he couldn’t see”. And thus the rich man “saw only his life and didn’t realize what was happening” to Lazarus.

In the final analysis, Francis affirmed, “the rich man wasn’t bad, he was sick: afflicted with worldliness”. And “worldliness transforms souls, makes them lose consciousness of reality: they live in an artificial world”, which they create. Worldliness “anaesthetizes the soul”, and “this is why that worldly man wasn’t able to see reality”.

This is why, the Pope explained, “the second story is clear”: there are “so many people who conduct their lives in a difficult way” but “if I have a worldly heart, I will never understand this”. After all, “with a worldly heart” is impossible to comprehend “the necessities and needs of others. With a worldly heart you can go to Church, you can pray, you can do many things”. But what did Jesus pray for at the Last Supper? “Please, Father, protect these disciples” so that “they do not fall in the world, do not fall into worldliness”. And worldliness “is a subtle sin, it’s more than a sin: it’s a sinful state of soul”.

“These are the two stories” presented by the Liturgy, the Pontiff recapped. “The two judgements”, instead, are “a curse and a blessing”. The First Reading from Jeremiah (17:5-10) reads: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord”. This, Francis stressed, is the profile of the “worldliness we saw” in the rich man. And how will this man end up? Scripture defines him as “‘a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness’ — his soul is a desert — ‘an uninhabited salt land’”. And all of this “because, in truth, the worldly are alone with their selfishness”. Then in the text of Jeremiah there is also a blessing: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water”, while the other “was like a shrub in the desert”. This, then, is “the final judgement: nothing is more treacherous for a heart and difficult to heal: that man had a sick heart, so battered by this worldly lifestyle that it was very difficult to heal”.

After the two stories and the two judgements, Francis also reiterated “the three names” offered in the Gospel Reading: “they are that of the poor man, Lazarus, that of Abraham, and that of Moses”. Another key to understanding is that the rich man “had no name, because the worldly lose their name”, which is merely a feature “of the well-off crowd who need nothing”. On the other hand are “Abraham, our father; Lazarus, a man who struggles because he is good and poor and has so much pain; and Moses, the man who gives us the law”. But “the worldly have no name. They didn’t listen to Moses”, because they only need extraordinary manifestations.

In the Church, the Pontiff continued, “everything is clear, Jesus spoke clearly: this is the way”. But “at the end there is a word of consolation: when that unfortunate worldly man, in torment, asks that Lazarus be sent with a bit of water to help him”, Abraham, who is the figure of God the Father, responds: “Son, remember...”. Thus “the worldly have lost their name” and “we too, should we have a worldly heart, we have lost our name”. However, “we are not orphans. Until the very end, until the final moment, there is the assurance that we have a Father who awaits us. Let us trust in Him”. And the Father turns to us, calling us ‘son’ and ‘daughter’, even “in the midst of that worldliness: ‘son’”. And this means that “we are not orphans”.

In the opening prayer, Francis said, “we asked the Lord for the grace to turn our hearts toward Him, who is Father”. And thus, the Pope concluded, “let us continue the celebration of Mass thinking of these two stories, of these two judgements, of the three names; but above all, of that beautiful word that will always be said until the final moment: ‘son’”.